SAMADARSANA

JAMES H. COUSINS

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SAMADARSANA

(SYNTHETIC VISION)

A STUDY IN
INDIAN
PSYCHOLOGY

BY

JAMES H. COUSINS

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J. H. C.

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I

THERE are certain words which fix themselves like barbs on the tongues of men, and strike through speech with iterated emphasis. They enter the verbal storehouse humbly enough at first, but after a while are found in a position of dominance. That blessed word "Renaissance" is one of these—a word of Latin birth and French upbringing, annexed by England and given to the four main winds of heaven by every articulate Indian at least once a month in speech or writing. Five years ago, when I published my book, *The Renaissance in India*, the word was a stranger in a strange land. It might have meant anything—fauna, flora, or something out of the terminology of tropical disease. To-day its general tendency to wakefulness is in the veins of India. There are speakers who feel that they have not done their duty to the Motherland and themselves if they

have not uttered it at least once in an hour, and where repetition has come in some cases to feel inartistic, the early-morning energy that is now felt to be in the word fulfils itself figuratively in the phrase "the dawn that is breaking over India".

This is excellent. I have nothing to repent in having let loose so stimulating a word to buzz mosquito-like in the ears of those who are not yet fully convinced that it is six a.m. in India. But words and phrases are double-natured. They can be spelt backwards as well as forwards. With their medicinal properties they subtly mix insidious poison. The invitation to contemplate "the dawn that is breaking over India" may easily be an invitation to *sit down* and *watch* it breaking—when in truth there is no dawn that is worth anything if we have not put our own shoulders to our own world and heartily shoved it towards the sunrise. We may talk of renaissance till we feel new grass growing under our feet; but we shall serve but little the purpose of the New Birth of India or any other country if our own hearts and minds are not the ploughed and sown fields of its upspringing; for the New Birth *may* come from beyond us, but it *must* come through us. To know the New Life we must live it. To live

it adequately we must understand it. To aid understanding is the aim of this study.

Renaissance simply means rebirth. To the Hindu mind this might carry the idea of personal reincarnation in a series of lives. But in its general sense the word expresses the rhythm of periodical expansion that is seen along the course of the recorded history of the nations, sometimes on the material level of the national life, sometimes in art, sometimes in religion, sometimes in all together.

As these expansive movements have passed into history, they have disclosed certain characteristic qualities which, while they appear as the result of the renaissance, will also, on examination, be found to be, in their analysis, the conditioning elements in the movement, and in their synthesis, a recognisable point of view or psychological attitude which subconsciously lays special emphasis on some particular aspect of the total life of humanity. And as knowledge grows "from more to more," and international sympathy and curiosity bring East and West into a cultural association which will ultimately provide material on which to base world-generalisations, we begin to perceive that the characteristics expressed through the various renascent movements are not independent, but

complementary, and bear a thought-provoking relationship to universal principles that are common to nature and humanity in all times and places.

The European Renaissance of the fifteenth century was not merely the discovery of a forgotten civilisation, but an effort of the European spirit to recover the symmetry of life which had been lost through the thousand years' domination of a single aspect of religious dogmatism. The sense of *form*, deep-rooted by nature in the imagination of humanity, had long suffered deprivation. The discovery of Greece was the discovery, by an urgent need, of a deep and suitable satisfaction. The ancient civilisation of Greece was a civilisation of form. "The wrong of unshapely things," against which an Irish poet complains, could not be laid at any Grecian door. Its plastic forms took possession of the imagination of Europe. Its intellectual forms, in literature and philosophy, became both a means of escape and a new chain. Edmund Spenser is frequently Plato in Elizabethan frills. Milton, solemnly engaged in the not over modest task of justifying the ways of God to men, finds satisfaction for the paganism that is in every true poet's heart in the elements drawn from the Renaissance, by

which he imparts a Grecian order to his own theological chaos. His masterpiece, "Paradise Lost," is masterly, not because of its justificatory argument, but because of the form and order of the imaginative landscape across which the argument is a negligible goat-path. . . Thus Europe recovered the sense of form. But she passed on to reduce form to formality, to hammer the natural pliability of organic life into organisation rigid and exclusive. From the shattered fragments of form with which Europe is now strewn, a cry goes up from the tortured spirit of humanity for a new renaissance.

When we turn to the other end of the great area of the old world, to Japan, we observe that the characteristic emphasis in her periods of renaissance is that of *appearance*. Europe gropes with her hands to find the secret of life; Japan's question is in her eyes. She looks for beauty in arrangement and colour, which belong to life seen on the flat rather than in the round. In her great renaissance in the sixth and seventh centuries she imbibed the spiritual idealism of India through Buddhism, and gave its expression in the arts her own touch of finesse. But in the tenth century she moved away from continental influences towards the insularity in which she developed her unique

and exquisite power of depicting the beauty of appearance. This however is no more ultimately satisfying than form; and Japan to-day, though spared the disaster of Europe, is in a state of cultural speculation, scrutinising the corners of the earth for some redemptive hint on the face of things. She too is crying out for a new renaissance.

Ireland has been in a state of chronic renaissance for nearly eight centuries, and never needed a New Birth more than to-day. But that phase of renaissance which displayed itself through her, twenty years ago, in the literary and dramatic revival led by the two master-poets, Yeats and AE, was the one which put her in rapport with the cultural sympathy of nations beyond her borders. Its aim was not so much the discovery of a New Birth as a protest against external domination which for nearly a millennium had prevented her from realising the fulness of her ancient life. It was a renaissance not of discovery but of recovery. Its antagonisms were not academic but personal. It produced next to nothing in the nature of philosophical thinking, but much in the nature of artistic creation and commentary. It was mainly a renaissance of *feeling*, a new "romantic movement" in literature and the arts. This

movement was no more satisfying or stable than the renaissance of form or the renaissance of appearance; and with the characteristic haste of emotion towards its fulfilment, it reached its maximum achievement with extraordinary rapidity, and as rapidly fell to its decline. Its primary impulse was spiritual; but it reduced itself ultimately to the level of a material and self-centred realism, and found its sequel in a hysterical internecine strife in which the expressions of the highest idealism are made the shibboleths of physical destruction. Signs of new life are showing themselves to-day—but they are as yet only signs.

To find a complete and consistent expression of renaissance at the highest level, the level of the abstract mind and the spiritual intuition, we have to turn to India, where the Aryan genius, with its ever active God-consciousness and synthetic vision of the One Cosmic Life, has remained dominant from time immemorial, and even in these days of cultural intermixture is capable of transforming suitable foreign elements into its own likeness. The first great renaissance experienced by the Aryan genius was that of the Buddhist protest against the extreme multiplicity and diversity to which Aryan spiritual conceptions had been

elaborated and crystallised in the early Brahmanical era. Then came the Hindu restoration through which the special aspect of spiritual thought and experience emphasised by Buddhism enriched the general body of Hinduism. In South India, dynastic changes were given a spiritual connotation in the development of temple architectural eras as memorials of military victory. The Mughal power, penetrating the Indian civilisation, was itself interpenetrated by the spirit of that civilisation, and Akbar the Great became as enthusiastic an exponent of the "One without a second" as any Rishi through whom were uttered the Upanishads of old. Akbar sought internal uniformity. The founders of the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar on the Southern Deccan asserted freedom in the external life, and unrestricted association. They set side by side the places of worship of all the sects in India, and proceeded a considerable distance towards the formulation of an all-India type of plastic art. To-day India is again experiencing the thrill and adventure and wonder of renaissance, and again her dominant psychological attitude of synthetic vision asserts itself in the modern world in her religion and philosophy, her arts and science.

II

Whatever be the value attached elsewhere to the particular view of life called pantheistic, the elucidation of the recurrent upsurges of renascent life in India will remain an impossibility without it; for the monistic conception of the external activities of life, their unity of source, their inter-relationships as modes of one super-consciousness expressing itself through one substance by one energy, is of the very essence of Indian thought, feeling, word and action, and equally so whether the individual speak in the terms of pure monism or of the dualism that is but monism viewed separately through each eye. This does not mean that every Indian villager acts as a philosopher; but it does mean that the details of life have a very definite relationship to philosophy, since that life in both its social and religious aspects has been elaborated out of the fundamental Vedic conception that remains to this day the nourisher and the critic of Indian civilisation. The renaissances of India have been the recurrent protests of the apprehension of unity against a too elaborate diversity—not against diversity as such, but against the tendency of forgetfulness of the centre which life is prone to at the

circumference—a hint from the root to the leaves that they make a mistake if in the music that the unseen fingers of the winds draw out of them there is no recognition of what is buried in the ground beneath them.

How does this central conception of the unity of things show itself as a general influence in the literary and artistic expressions of the renaissance in India past and present? We get a hint towards understanding in the writings of that excellent scholar, thinker and creator, the Japanese artist and traveller, Okakura Kakuzo, whose works, (and in this connection particularly *The Ideals of the East*) should be intellectual daily bread to all who are on the trail towards the secret of Asia as well as of India.

In the chapter on the Heian period in the history of Japan (A.D. 800 to 900), Okakura marks the passage from India to Japan of the Indian aspiration towards "same-sightedness" (*samadarsana*) then specially showing itself in a curious diametrical movement (not emphasised by Okakura), namely, the absorption of Buddhism by Hinduism in India and the absorption of Hinduism by Buddhism in Japan. Out of this same-sightedness, or vision of the One Life through its multifarious forms, arose a

democratisation of thought and emotion in India, China and Japan. In Japan it showed itself in the promulgation of the Mikkio or esoteric doctrine of Buddhism, "whose philosophic basis is such as to make it capable of including the two extremes of ascetic self-torture and the worship of physical rapture." In its early stage it centred itself in the material, and regarded the symbol as realisation. Later it rose to the ideal, and its exponents claimed their own "descent from and direct communion with Vairochana, the Supreme Godhead, of which the Sakya-Buddha was only one manifestation. They aimed at finding truth in all religions and all teachings, each of them being its own method of attaining the highest".

In literature and the arts the natural tendency of such a central attitude should be towards a reduction of extremes of value, since all the details of life are energised by what Okakura calls the Impersonal-Universal. The æsthetical distinction between beauty and ugliness should become very thin. There should be a subtle overlapping between the arts, literature having something of architecture in it, painting something of literature, and so forth.

Now these are just the characteristics in Indian cultural expression that worry those who

are ignorant of, or have no sympathy with, the underlying conception of unity, and bewilder those who, with the best heart in the world, are denied the means of mental response. I have already (in *The Renaissance in India*) exposed the fallacies propounded by John Ruskin with regard to Indian art in his lecture, "The Two Paths". The more recent utterances of William Archer have received the critical attention of Sir John Woodroffe and Aurobindo Ghose. One reference only I shall indulge in here as indicating the ineptitude that haunts a criticism that has not taken all the facts into account, and rears a base of false generalisation on an apex of inadequate particularity. In his chapter on Winckelmann, the eighteenth century German philosopher, in *The Renaissance*, Walter Pater, in a comparison of Greek and Indian art, says: "In oriental thought there is a vague conception of life everywhere, but no true appreciation of itself by the mind, no knowledge of the distinction of man's nature: in its consciousness of itself, humanity is still confused with the fantastic, indeterminate life of the animal and vegetable world." Such is Pater's apprehension of Indian thought. On all fours with it is his valuation of Indian art. He sees in it a comradeship of other-worldliness

with the artists of the Middle Ages of Europe, and under the label of "symbolists" sends them to limbo with Dr. Johnson's "metaphysical" poets. "As in the Middle Age from an exaggerated inwardness, so in the East from a vagueness, a want of definition in thought, the matter presented to art is unmanageable, and the forms of sense struggle vainly with it. The many-headed gods of the East, the orientalised, many-breasted Diana of Ephesus, like Angelico's fresco, are at best overcharged symbols, a means of hinting at an idea which art cannot fitly or completely express, which still remains in the world of shadows."

It is not within my province here to analyse the assumptions of these statements. (This has been done in my book, *The Philosophy of Beauty*.) Their source is in a personal limitation of the critic which he shared with his age and race—the denial of the vision of the One Life, and therefore the deprivation of the symbolical sense. On the subject of oriental art they are about as valuable as the opinion of a colour-blind man on the six p[illegible] tints of the Bay of Bengal and the sky above it seen from the Adyar beach. Their use to us now is in their reflection of the fact that the realisation of *samadarsana* leads to overlappings (which the

philosophically untrained mind of the critic interprets as vagueness), and that its natural expression is symbolism. These characteristics have persisted through the whole history of Indian culture, and reassert themselves in the renascent movements to-day. Curiously enough, they have also asserted themselves in the movements of revolt in art in Europe—in post-impressionism, futurism and cubism, which are definite though unconscious strugglings of the philosophically starved European spirit to achieve its share of same-sightedness. The "false anatomy" and "wrong perspective" of the frescoes of Ajanta, the multiplication of limbs, the "stiff" postures, the "unintelligible" gestures (*mudras*) of Indian sculpture, are all externalisations of the inner perception of a super-material source of life, and are as immediately intelligible and evocative to those to whom the code is second nature as the purely artificial symbolism of these printed characters is to those to whom their use is automatic.

External criticism has been eloquent on the alleged technical defects of Indian art. These are patent to the outer eye, and call for nothing more than the ordinary endowment of ignorance and narrowness for their exposition. The overlapping to which I have referred between the

arts as a necessary outcome of *samadarsana* is more subtle and has therefore escaped critical observation. It may yet come to be seen as the most significant characteristic of Indian cultural expression. It is operating in the renaissance to-day. In general terms it shows itself as the infusion of philosophy through religion and religion through philosophy; as the interpenetration of art with the spirit of literature and of literature with the spirit of art. It is that which preserves order in the midst of apparent disorderly elaboration, and reduces the whole of Indian philosophy to an expression of a Trinity-in-Unity (the Trimurti, or triple image of Brahma or creative energy, Vishnu or conserving substance, and Shiva or evolving consciousness), and at the same time imparts to the supposedly impersonal the warmth of the personal.

III

In the realm of plastic art, this overlapping shows itself in the intellectual accompaniment of every creative work. Behind the instrument of the artist is the tradition that may be read by all. I have talked with the lineal descendant of temple image-makers who, with a figure in

the making on his knee that was an embodiment of the *shastras*, knew no more of the *shastras* than of the Thirty-nine Articles of Christian belief. And I, head-learned somewhat in the written word, would have broken the heart of the image and its maker with one little touch of my technical ignorance. Behind that image stood also the whole *pauranic* memory of India—its place in the Pantheon, its biography ; deeper still, the meaning of its adornments; and, at root of all, its spiritual significance. From Ajanta in the sixth century to Santiniketan to-day the hierarchy of painters have carried in their satchels the food of the *Vedas* and the *Commentaries*, the *Ramayana*, the *Gita*, and in their *lohtas* the reflecting waters of a sensitive and vital symbolism that concerned not only the supreme Indian pre-occupation with the One Life and its embodiments in humanity and art, but also the common acts of life and the environment of nature. The realistic idealism of Ajanta lived on in Rajputana, and alongside the home-life of Hinduism set the pictured esoteric conception of music, visualised in the *ragas* of the Jaipur school. The Mughal invasion of exquisiteness was avenged in a counter-invasion of Hindu vitality; and all—idealism, realism, beauty—have passed into the

hearts and brains and fingers of the modern Bengal school of painting.

The renaissance of Indian painting is a new assertion of unity, but of a synthetic unity; a gathering up and co-ordinating of all the qualities that have found a place in Indian art during the ages. I have dealt with it in detail in *The Renaissance in India* and *Work and Worship*, and shall only here touch on it by referring to a picture which has recently been in my hands, a picture by Babu Asit Haldar which seems to me to sum up the whole quality of the new renaissance, and to exemplify that fusion of literature and art, of religion and philosophy, to which I have referred. The subject is Krishna's Dance before Radha. To the eye alone it is a most beautiful presentation of the young man Krishna, with his companions, amusing a beautiful girl and her attendant maidens. It is done in the Ajanta manner, but the fineness of Persia has entered into it. It is perfect in every line and tint. As a picture only, it is a treasure. But the artist has done something more than limn the surface of things. He is steeped in the Vaishnava tradition. The boys and the girls (as realistic as could be desired, and pulsating with young life, albeit as pure as crystal) are more than human beings;

they are the outer expression of the two phases of the true life, the Soul external and internal. Sight and insight are here unified. Creation and commentary are one. We may rest content in the picture's beauty, but its significances call us from seashore pleasures to the solemn joy of the ocean's depths.

When we turn to the poetical aspect of the Renaissance in India, we are faced with a task of such dimensions and variety that it is impossible here to do more than lift a finger of direction and recognition. The renaissance in painting is a comparatively simple matter. It is chronologically separated from the past, and belongs to a restricted area. Its language is clear and almost universal. But literature in India is so continuous, so vast in quantity, so varied in verbal expression, that the profoundest scholarship may well stand foolishly on the margin of it and admit that its knowledge is as an ant-hill to the mountain of its ignorance. The geographical area of Indian literature would throw a line round the literatures of England, Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, the Balkans, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Belgium. There is little or no communication between its linguistic units. When a Gujerati

poet dies by accident, the *accident* is telegraphed to Madras, but none of his poetry. All India was informed when Mohammed Iqbal was knighted for eminence in Persian song, but few have cried out for examples of his song. The melodramatic event is enough.

And yet, from the glimpses caught now and again through the twisted glass of translation, one gathers an impression of a living impulse in poetry making itself felt from Kashmir to the Tamil country, and, for all its difference of voice and adornment, singing one song, the song of the One Life. There are gems of poetry in the mine of India's past to be had for the mere gathering. Many know *about* the songs of Mirabai. The name of Tukaram is familiar. Kabir in the North, Kambha in the South, these and a host of others have sung their " inmost in the sweetest way ". There should be an all-India anthology in each vernacular, and one in English for the good of humanity at large.

There is a very real curiosity outside India as to the literature of India. Her philosophy is, of course, known the world over; but there is a demand for knowledge of her authentic creative expression,—not English or other *versions* of Indian thought and feeling, but

translations (as vital and faithful as they can be) of the actual works of Indian writers past and present. This would do much to stop the epidemic of bad versification in English from which so many "educated" Indians suffer. I am the recipient of bundles of manuscript from all parts of India. Much of the contents of these bundles is useless from the point of view of the Renaissance in India—bad verses in the English of the Augustan age, lame in scansion and innocent of syntax, the monstrous offspring of a spurious culture tied to the tail of Indian youth. But occasionally there comes a bundle which brings with it the vibration of reality, the aroma of sincerity, the divine touch of true creation, not the clammy mortality of mere imitation or the feverishness of an induced excitement. Here is a quatrain of the wrong kind:

> The raining roof a previous pouring tells,
> Love's languid lip a tale of kisses swells.
> The bad harvest the ploughman's fault
> disclose,
> Of scorching rays, whispers the withered
> rose.

The alliteration stamps it as derivative. The second line is untrue to Indian feeling, and equally untrue to western æsthetic feeling in its ugly figure of speech. The third line is false

in both scansion and grammar. Now read the following:

O Cowherd Prince of Brindavan!
O celestial Fluter!
Fill the cup of my frail life
With the wine of Thy song,
That I may melt into liquid music,
And flow into eternity.

O Poet of the universal Poem!
Touch the camphor of my heart
With the spark of Divine Wisdom,
That I may burn at Thy lotus feet,
Wafting perfume into the air.

O Light of the Worlds!
Show to my inner vision
Thy Divine Radiance,
That my tears of joy may bloom
Into flowers for Thy worship.

There you have the directness of utterance, the thrilling and crystalline beauty, that come from the expression of the heart shaped by a mind working freely through its own tradition and speech. As here presented in English, though only as a prose translation by their author, these lines stand ages above the mass of free-verse that is turned out to-day in America and England. They have the rhythmic structure that belongs to architecture, yet each stanza is like a pillar in a temple, true brother to the other pillars, but individually different. They have also the element of symbolism that is the

natural expression of the vision that sees through the details of life to its centre—the quality of *samadarsana* or same-sightedness; but the symbolism is no cold likening of this to that; it is made living and immediate by the feeling of the poet.

This poem is from a small collection of translations from the Telugu made by the author himself, D. Rami Reddi, a young poet of the Andhradesa.[1] All through the poems there is that touch of intimacy with the details of Indian life, thought, feeling and environment, which gives the stamp of authenticity where they are familiar and the charm of originality where unfamiliar. One such example I take from a poem entitled "Fields in Rain".

> How picturesque are the cranes
> Flying against the smoky sky,
> Like a garland of emancipated souls
> Winging their way heavenward,
> Having broken the mortal bonds of form
>   and life.

The natural fact (the homing cranes) and its symbolical suggestion (a garland of emancipated souls) are wholly Indian; and, just because they are wholly and sincerely Indian, they have a universal appeal.

[1] Published under the title "The Voice of the Reed" by Ganesh & Co.

So much for the younger generation—a meagre indication, but an indication towards reality nevertheless. When we look in the direction of the elders, we find encouraging and growing signs that, while linguistic barriers have stood between the cultural units making up the larger unit of India, within the various cultural areas the spirit of creation has found response rich and full. When we think of Rabindranath Tagore, we hardly think of a man but of a literature of creation which has created a literature of criticism, and set the province of Bengal among the inescapable things in world geography. In him the ancient wisdom of India finds fresh voice. Indeed, it is one of the buzzings of waspish criticism that he says nothing new; in saying which the critics commit the very offence which they in their foolishness derogate, and the poet in his wisdom confesses; for, as said a wise man of western Asia thousands of years ago, "There is nothing new under the sun."

We here pass from Rabindranath (to whom we shall return later) with the mere recognition of his singing of India's age-long chant of the One Life.

> The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean cradle of birth and death, in ebb and in flow.

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.

But the Bengali poet who has captured the world has his great brethren. I have spoken of the knighting of Mohammed Iqbal for eminence in Persian song. But Iqbal is an Indian poet. In his *Secrets of the Self* [translated by Dr. R. A. Nicholson (Macmillan)], Iqbal says:

> I am of India: Persian is not my native tongue . . .
> O Reader, do not find fault with the wine-cup,
> But consider attentively the taste of the wine.

In his verses the Persian languor is transmuted into a vigour that ranges from the external life to the inmost core of spiritual longing. Energy is his note, as one might surmise from his sturdy frame. I had seen it in his works (in translation), and saw it in himself when, in the throbbing heat of the Panjab summer, hearing that I was whiling away some hours between trains in the railway waiting-room at Lahore, he came through the hottest hour of the

afternoon to see me, and showed his intellectual energy in a long discussion of philosophical fundamentals as well as mutual literary interests. To my surprise (one is always surprised at living ratification of what one knows) I found him, the poet of Islamic progress, a keen student of Vedanta. Afterwards I recalled many lines in which *samadarsana* had touched this poet of Islam, as it had touched some of his ancestors, to the vision of the One Life. The opening lines of *Secrets of the Self* might almost be a translation from the *Upanishads*.

> The form of existence is an effect of the Self.
> Whatsoever thou seest is a secret of the Self.
> When the Self awoke to consciousness,
> It revealed the universe of Thought.
> A hundred worlds are hidden in its essence;
> Self-affirmation brings Not-self to light.
> By the Self the seed of hostility is sown in the world;
> It imagines itself to be other than itself.
> It makes from itself the forms of others
> In order to multiply the pleasure of strife.
> It is slaying by the strength of its arm
> That it may become conscious of its own strength.
> Its self-deceptions are the essence of Life.

These lines are translations robbed of the subtle aroma of verbal connotations that form so large a part of the æsthetical pleasure of original poetry. They give us, with some touch

of rhythm, the intellectual content of the poem; and this is sufficient to disclose the element of same-sightedness which is the subject-matter of our study.

Puran Singh, the Sikh poet, the devotee of the "turban'd Man, the owner of the skies," whose writings have recently come into favour in the West, puts the matter plainly and sees the One Life behind the religions. In a song on his spiritual master, Guru Nanak in *The Sisters of the Spinning Wheel* (Dent), he sings:

> The Buddha seated on the white lotus with his Nepal tresses knotted on his brow;
> The Christ with his maiden braids, his God-lit eyes, his transfigured face;
> Mohamed of the direct glance, with his blazing heart and cleaving sword, that flash and kindle the deserts with Heaven's glow;
> All Heaven is revealed in them, . . .
> . . . A Man of God stands behind men, to guide and to teach . . .
> It is true for us forever. God himself cometh to man in the shape of Man who spells Him for us . . . He is the sign and symbol. Hail, Holy One!
> He is the Truth Eternal . . . one indivisible unity . . .
> The world met Him in Krishna, Buddha; in Christ, in Mohamed. But I know Him as my Lord and Father,—*Baba*, Guru Nanak . . .

That is the vision of *samadarsana*, of the One in the many and the many in the One, that has

within it the power of redemption for a world stricken to ruin by the sword of separateness.

IV

In the foregoing pages we glanced very cursorily at the influence of synthetic vision in Indian painting. We shall now trace that influence in the works of Promode Kumar Chatterjee, one of the artists associated with the modern revival of the art in Bengal.

The name of Babu Chatterjee had been known very vaguely to me prior to June, 1923, as one of the young artists of the new school. But in that month I had the shock of discovery when I received a copy of a magazine, printed in language unintelligible to me, but having a cover design of most striking and beautiful character—an image of the Goddess Sharada, an aspect of Saraswati Devi, the celestial embodiment of Truth and Beauty in one. My knowledge of Hindu symbolism was sufficient to take me a considerable distance along the path of appreciation, after I had experienced the more general joy of the " essential pictorial qualities " of line and colour which Pater says should first delight us in a picture as a preliminary to our enjoyment of " whatever poetry or

science may lie beyond them" in the intention of the artist. I was charmed by the design, line and colour, and satisfied by the significance. Then came the shattering news that this beautiful and chaste representation of celestial Personality had been refused transit through the post because it was so "obscene" as to be removed beyond the pale of art! This extraordinary edict, with its reflex criticism of my own artistic sanity, drove me into enquiries as to the artist and his other works. His masters and intimates spoke of him in the highest terms as a man of shining idealism, a deep student of philosophy, incapable of an impure thought or action. I carried his "obscene" picture with me on a tour from Calcutta to Kashmir and back to Madras by Sind and Bombay. I showed it to many Indians, and a number of intelligent Europeans, and noticed in the Indians the universal spontaneous attitude of reverence to Deity, without a trace of sex-reaction. Then I told of the prohibition of the picture. The effect was always as of an electric shock, sometimes of dumb bewilderment, sometimes of indignation. When leisure came to me I wrote a protest in the press, and looked vaguely forward to an opportunity of meeting the artist and seeing more of his work.

The opportunity came more quickly than I anticipated. The anniversary exhibition of the school of oriental painting, founded three years ago at the National Technical College, better known as the Andhra Jateeya Kalasala, Masulipatam, and the simultaneous opening of a permanent oriental art collection, were made the occasion of an invitation from the college authorities to me to preside over the double function. I was more than pleased to accept the invitation, for the art teacher was Babu P. K. Chatterjee himself, and it was in the self-same school that the prohibited design was made. I was to receive from the artist a gift of the offending original design. By a happy coincidence the train that carried me to Masulipatam carried also the official withdrawal of the prohibition. The curious focussing of circumstances and persons made the occasion one of much exhilaration; but above and beyond the happy fortuitisms of life there came to me the revelation of genius, of which I had hitherto been unaware, in the works of Mr. Chatterjee. The exhibition occupied a single room. It was cramped, ill-lighted, and scrawled all over by the attempt to make a show out of the financial nothingness of Indian life, an attempt which always touches me with its heroic pettiness.

Yet there, in hopeless inadequacy save in desire, eternal Beauty bloomed, and in its blooming let loose on the air the all-pervasive Presence of the One Divine Life out of which India has created her religions and philosophies, her arts and institutions. I recognised at once that I was at a creative centre where all things were possible, and I found time for the long and solitary communion in front of the pictures out of which one may attain fullness of appreciation and criticism. There were works by the young students of the school of much promise and considerable achievement, but it was the art of the young master that set me on my "peak in Darien"—and not all silently.

There were perhaps a score of pictures by Mr. Chatterjee on exhibition, some unfinished, others that I knew already in reproduction. Their first impression was one of sheer beauty, though of a beauty removed from sentimentality. They had that pervasive sense of perfection which comes with so many of the best works of the Indian painters past and present, and relegates all studio tattle of technique to the background by a conviction that makes them feel as if they had been precipitated complete by some act of artistic legerdemain. Taking an eye-full of the matter, one felt, Here is art

in excelsis. Just how or why was for after discovery. But the picture of *Lakshmi*, the Goddess of good fortune, being operated upon and through by the four elephants, *Dharma* (law), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire), and *Moksha* (liberation), remembered side by side with another representation of the same subject by a painter after another fashion, showed what was art and what was not. A definition by an English critic of much insight (A. Clutton Brock) touched the matter to the quick: "When all the knowledge and skill and passion of mankind are poured into the acknowledgment of something greater than themselves, then that acknowledgment is art . . ." Here was knowledge (one saw step by step) that covered a vast and ancient culture, yet had its grasp on matters of the moment. Here was skill so skilful as to mask itself in an artistic reality of its own creation. Here was passion of such quality that it chased the gibbering demon that has usurped the name in men's imaginations. Here was the meeting-place of all three in an oblation of art towards the Infinite. Beauty and Truth had become one. Sharada was now seen as no mere artistic "subject" for a designer, but a self-projection of the artist himself through the terminology of his tradition.

Then came contrasts. Standing opposite a masterpiece of classical art (*Visvakarma*, of which more anon) was *Tarulata* (Sanskrit for tree and creeper), a piece of perfect observation and translation of natural beauty. Looked at from a distance, the effect was of pastelle, soft and indeterminate; looked at closely, the effect was almost of water-colour on canvas. It was in fact water-colour on a rough paper made in a neighbouring village called Kondapalli. The rough surface imposed limitation on the usual method of infinite fineness on smooth-surfaced paper. But the genius of the artist had revelled in a *tour de force* of technique, and succeeded. Another picture in the same manner, Savitri and Satyavan in the forest, told the heroically pitiful story in a compelling beautiful way. The human interest in the noble lady and her dying husband was drawn out in poignant sweetness. Every line of the figures was expressive. The prow of the artist's imagination carried no dead water with it. The same concentrated expressiveness was seen in *Tapo Bhanga*, the temptation of the ascetic Viswamitra by a nymph who became the mother of Shakuntala. The story is told with a reserve and subtlety that reduce vulgar externals, and reveal the essential spiritual

significance. The psychology of the sage, as he is awakened from his meditation by the call of the *rajasic* world which he thought he was free from, is admirably realised in his troubled look, which is a compound of repose and sudden challenge.

I began to see in these and other pictures (The Call of Light, to which I shall refer later, and Man and Woman—a man shooting arrows while a woman replenishes his quiver) what I took to be a characteristic mode of the artist's imagination, a sensitiveness to the dual principle that keeps life alive, and the co-operative struggle that is maintained in every corner of the kingdom of life natural and super-natural. This is the mode of the imagination that sees and reflects the drama of life, as distinct from its poetry or its science. And the ability to reflect indicates an affinity of spirit which tends to fulfil itself in an artist's daily experience as well as in his art.

I sought clues in this direction as, in an interval, I sat with him on the verandah of his cottage, and partook of tasty Indian food off a leaf-plate with finger and thumb. He had been early drawn to art, and as a youth of twenty-one (he was born in Calcutta in 1885) was a contemporary of Nanda Lal Bose, Asit Kumar

Haldar and the late S. N. Gangooly under the tuition of Abanindranath Tagore when the latter was the Acting Principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, after the retirement of Mr. E. B. Havell. But he had no sympathy with the retrograde step, as he then considered it, from the western art which had previously been taught in the school, to what he regarded as the unnatural and obsolete oriental method. He was all for Michelangelo and Raphael, oil colours, brilliancy and contrast . . . Then a devastating tragedy in his domestic life drove him to the wilderness in renunciation of the frivolities of art and in search of clear light on the dark problem of life and death. He spent five years wandering as a lonely ascetic in nearly all the pilgrimages of Northern India as well as among the Western Tibetan Himalayas, visiting temple after temple and teacher after teacher, hearing spiritual truth from them, reading it in his own Hindu scriptures, but most of all digging down to the wellspring of immortal Truth in his own being. In the fulness of time he was drawn back to Calcutta and art; for to the artist, discovery must ever be but a secondary lure; creation is his life, and mothering calls for a place of abode. But Mr. Chatterjee returned with a difference.

Michelangelo had joined the shades; the brilliance and contrast of oil colour had found its place among the *rajasic* (passionate) things of life; nothing would serve the purpose of his soul but water colour and the old oriental method; wild horses could not pull him in the direction of his past life that was now indeed past. And thus the Indian artist in him came to the surface. But the period of transition had given a permanent strenuousness to his nature, and his vision could never again be wholly of the eye. What he saw, he felt; and what he felt, he saw; and the dexterity of the hand, that was his by race or reincarnation, received and expressed a mutually reinforcing and subtilising interaction of thought and feeling whose outer form was *energy*.

It is this energy which ultimately seemed to me to give distinction to the art of Mr. Promode Kumar Chatterjee amongst that of his distinguished fellow artists, though the word has, in general use, a boisterousness foreign to my intention. It shows itself in a certain clarity and grip not always achieved by other artists of the same school. It gives to his work a sense of abundant vitality, and a rhythmical feeling as though music, mostly a mantric chant, were not far away. It is seen in all the degrees of his art,

from its physical body, or technique, through its æsthetical aspect (in which, by reason of elevation and grandeur, the artist stands as a Francis Thompson of painting), through its deliberate mentality, up to those great implicit assumptions of *samadarsana* concerning the nature of things which give hue and direction, consciously or unconsciously, to artists and their art, and which constitute, in truth, the soul of art.

This energy, with its accompanying "fine excess," which Keats set down as the surprise imparted by true poetry, urges Mr. Chatterjee into liberal areas and numbers. A pair of Krishna pictures (40″×27″) stand out for their artistic generosity, the one in its crowd of Pauranic notabilities, headed by the blind old King Dhritarashtra, receiving, with varied emotions known through epic to all India, the divinely endowed Ambassador; the other in its elaborate study of horses, chariot, and the distant battle-array of Kurukshetra at the moment of world-import when Sri Krishna begins for the edification of Arjuna (and of all mankind to-day) the *Bhagavad-Gita* or Song of the Lord. In this masterly pair of contrasted personal and mass studies, the artist gives full play to his technical skill and to the interaction of large generalisation and fineness of detail which the

modern Indian artists have taken over with perfect justification from the whole tradition of Asian art. The sobriety and harmony of the colour scheme is not less pleasing than the grouping of the figures.

By the side of these stands another aspect of energy in the low-toned painting of Chandrasekhara (16″×10″), the contemplative aspect of the young Shiva. The figure sits cross-legged, wrapped in meditation and darkness. There is no external lighting in the picture. As much of it as reaches the eye is through a vaguely diffused illumination from the crescent moon on the forehead of the Deity, in which we no more than glimpse the symbolical accompaniments of snakes and skulls. What comes to us is the celestial forehead and shut eyes moon-illuminated, and, in the shadowed lower half of the still but immensely living face, the firm delicate mouth. To those not conversant with the Indian practice of meditation, this description, if not the picture itself, may convey an impression of mere unconscious lassitude; but there is all the difference between the flabby contours and lines of relaxed quietness and this erect and tense figure of Shiva as the chief of Yogis who has imposed His will on the irresponsible involuntary movement that constitutes so

much of external activity. The passivity of meditation is not, in the psychology and experience of India, a state of negativity, but a positive and super-energetic focussing of the powers of one's nature in an inward and upward direction to a point at which the individual consciousness touches the Universal Consciousness, and experiences the realisation, as distinct from the intellectual understanding, of its essential unity with the Cosmos.

In "Manasa" the energy is definitely intellectual both in the restricted sense of the term which confines mental operation to the technical element in the picture, and in the sense of intellectual conception in the subject-matter—which occidental criticism regards as inartistic intrusion. There is a special fitness in the artist's brainy treatment of the theme, for Manasa herself, worshipped in Bengal, is a personalising of an aspect of the Cosmic Mind; not the abstract and poised operation of Chandrasekhara, but the active, burrowing, sidelong, swift-striking faculty of the mind. For this the Indian imagination ages ago chose the cobra as the symbol, and this Indian artist of to-day, steeped in his tradition, has so thoroughly assimilated the serpentine idea that it finds expression in every line of the picture.

The Goddess is seated on a large cobra; She is decorated with serpents; serpents are entwined in Her hair; Her hair itself, Medusa-like, is snake-like, and Her fingers thrill with serpentine life. The whole composition in its central conception and its details is an extraordinary piece of accumulative consistency.

A similar consistency is seen in "Visvakarma," a pictorial representation of the active aspect of the creator, Brahma, and referred to as the Celestial Architect, who constructed the stage for the Cosmic Drama. The figure is set against a swirling background of cosmic stuff. Each of the eight hands is vibrating with a distinctive expression of cosmic energy. The figure, "monstrous" though it be from the point of view of present-day human anatomy, is conceived and presented with such conviction, its symbolism is so fired by the artist's enthusiasm for the indicated verities, that it becomes to the attentive observer an immense reality. This effect is helped by the beauty and assurance of the craftsmanship. There is not a line or area that does not seem as inevitable as the aspect of the Universal Life of which the picture is a hieroglyph. Vision, emotion and execution are so unified by the spiritual energy of the artist that what might have achieved the distinction

of being an admirable symbolical image has been transfigured into a living entity; the artist's image of the Creator has become an artistic creation.

Bulk and weight are added to the artist's energy in "Kalki." The celestial Horseman, the avatara of the Divine Power in the present age, or *kali-yuga*, the Spirit ruling the tide of time, guides His horse with vast inevitability towards the seashore from seaward. The sense of inevitable movement is admirable realised, but its speed is not of the race-course; it is millennial. Herein the intellect of the artist takes count of the slow march of time in an era that traditionally has four hundred millennia still to run. Another item, analysed from a composition that, in its purely pictorial aspect, is of most striking quality, is the putting into the right hand of Kalki of two swords, one dark, one light. "Day and night," thought I, catching at an obvious, and, even at that, a pleasing piece of symbolism. But something out of memory touched me with a sense of the inadequacy of the solar-myth interpretation where the spiritual mythos of India is concerned. I saw that the double weapon was no glyph of physical light and darkness, but a pictorial presentation of the ancient prophecy that the

way from the age of darkness (the *kali-yuga*) to the coming age of spiritual light (the *sat-yuga*) would be cleared by the invincible blades of of *gnana* and *karma*—wisdom fulfilled in action, action directed by wisdom.

"In times past people acted in darkness ignorantly," I mused aloud.

"*We* are very wise," said the artist, "but we do not act according to our wisdom. That is why the world is so troubled. In the coming age, thought and action will both be perfect because they will be balanced by one another."

The combined rebuke and anticipation in his voice, the rhythmical sway of his body, the eagerness in the pleasant face, showed me in a glance that his picture was no mere shadow of an ancient myth, but the embodiment of his heart's desire and his vision's prophecy. Mind and emotion, working through racial tendency and personal idealism, had set the artist astride the horse of his dream in a subtle apprehension of the truth that the Spirit of the Ages, in any of its successive appearances as the Spirit of an Age, is no vague abstraction, no remote transcendental entity, but the offspring of cosmic reality and the reaction to it of such sensitive and far-seeing souls as this wise and highly gifted artist.

Whereupon I bethought me of Walter Pater's remark in his essay on the Italian painter, Botticelli, that when he painted religious incidents, "he painted them with an undercurrent of original sentiment which touches you as the real matter of the picture through the veil of its ostensible subject". And I turned over in my mind certain thoughts on the relationship of the real and the ostensible in art which afterwards I set down as follows.

Apart from the question prompted in an age of psycho-analysis as to whether the "real matter" referred to by Pater was the reality to the painter, or only the critic's own response to one phase of the artist's work, there is undoubtedly in European art a space between subject-matter (religious subject-matter in particular) and the general artistic temperament. Every artist, plastic or verbal, has been more or less a rebel against the restrictions which social and religious orthodoxy put on the free creative spirit. The "ostensible subject" of "Paradise Lost" was the justification of the ways of God to men, but the "original sentiment" of Milton performed the unconscious paradox of transferring to Satan the most dynamic form of justification, the justification of sympathy. We may bow the head in respect to Milton's

God, but for his Satan we have a secret squeeze of the hand . . . For all Fra Filippo Lippi's preoccupation with religious themes, his temperamental passionateness swept him right through his theology back to the old Adam in himself; and, while we may not now follow old-time criticism in attributing sensuality to all his pictures because of his abduction of a nun who was vowed, like himself, to the supersensual life, we can at least see in the incident the personal explanation of the space between the "ostensible subject" and "original sentiment" which robs European religious art of much of its conviction and gives it a feeling of being at once solid and hollow.

But the explanation of this interesting psychological component of art goes deeper than personality, and touches those great assumptions regarding the nature of things which differentiate not only the work of particular artists but also the whole artistic expression of races and nations. Botticelli may paint poetically, as Pater says, because he is naturally poetical; but the personal tendency to the artistic hypocrisy which Pater points out is reinforced by the general tendency to put a space between religion and life, and particularly between religion as a matter of authority and

art as a free function of life. These artists worked within the spiritual limitations of their time; but deep within them was a smouldering revolt of their own natural creativeness against the sterility of dogma that had ceased to evoke the ratification of the intellect or inner experience, and ceremonial whose meanings had lost the glow of spiritual reality. From then onward the space between religion and art grew wider. Criticism (accepting, because it knew no other connotation of religion than that of the time, the divorce between religion and life) set up a false division of sacred and secular in art, and turned away from the "ostensible subject" of painting to the beatification of technique. The artist came to be regarded as artist merely, and æsthetics reverted to the Socratic test of personal impression and utility. This was revived by Pater, who gibes at "metaphysical questions" (such as the relationship of beauty to truth and experience) as "unprofitable," and, with the inconsistency of those who deny the undeniable, is himself at pains, in a lucid metaphysical moment, to distinguish the metaphysic of Dante from that of Plato and to point out that it was the Platonic tradition that moulded Michelangelo's poetry.

In India we find a psychological situation quite different from that of Europe; and it is only as one enters into fuller understanding of it that one learns gradually to approach the true value of Indian art, and to realise that an æsthetic which may serve the limited needs of one type of consciousness, may be inadequate for a type of consciousness whose assumptions regarding the nature of things are more fundamental, inclusive and elaborate. In the imagination of India there is no space between religion, art and life. Religion in Hindu India is inexplicable without art and dead without life; art is energised by religion and made purposeful (not merely useful) by life; life is shaped and sanctified by religion and made vocal by art. This inter-relationship, or, better, intermixture, is the root of the bewilderment of European criticism at the elaborate symbolism of Indian plastic art on the one hand, and, on the other, the curious phenomenon of a philosophical emotion. Indian art is in the interesting position of being charged by western criticism with a too cold and formal abstraction in her plastic arts, and simultaneously being charged by propagandist Christianity with idolatry which lavishes on thousands of images the devotion which should be given to the one God.

The complaint of idolatrous sectarianism against Indian art in some of its phases would come more fittingly from those who did not accept the whole gallery of mediæval European painting as among the universal things in art, when, in fact, precisely the same charge of sectarianism might be made against it because of its pre-occupation with religious personalities. Indeed it may be said that the sectarianism of the religious art of Europe is more strictly sectarian than that of the religious art of India, for it limits the vast multitudinous unity of the Cosmic Being to manifestation in a single corporeal personality, and while it speaks of the Divine Omnipresence, reserves for one little land the exclusive distinction of sanctity.

On the other hand (and our comparison is not theological, but concerned only with the psychological components of art-criticism), the hinterland of the Indian artist's imagination is populated with vast figures which, beyond their separate identities, are subtly intermixed, and seen as adumbrations of various aspects of the Cosmic Life in which the artist is himself a sharer. Their apparent multiplicity is that of a stage crowd in "the Play of Brahma"; yet they are given worship as realities because of the Real that is operating through them. They

are thus set free from the restriction that is natural to the conception of a single embodiment of Divinity; and, from the point of view of the artist, they are æsthetically enriched by the associations that they have with the various activities of the universe, and by the symbolical accompaniments that express those associations.

Both of the self-contradictory charges against Indian art, of at once blowing idolatrously hot and philosophically cold, arise out of an inability to understand the full import of the central conception of the Hindu mind, which, strange as it may appear, is just the very idea that Indian religion and art are regarded as offending against—the unity of life celestial and terrestrial as the diversified activity of One Divine Being. In the Hindu imagination God is everywhere; and where this attitude is the normal result of an age-long tradition there can be no such thing as mere abstraction and impersonality: the Universe is saturated with the Divine Personality; everywhere one's fingers may feel the pulse of God; a syllable, properly uttered, may open a door into the invisible worlds. A series of gradations of approach is seen as between the item and the totality, between a sheet of printed paper and the culture Goddess Saraswati; and the

reverence given to the details is less for themselves than for their significances. The way to God is, verily, obstructed by images of God; but the most obstructive of these are not the graven images of polytheism, which are robbed of their tyrannical power by their multiplicity and symbolism, but the mental and emotional images which, because they spring from one's own personality, delude us with a simulated and flattering reality. There are those who denounce the safe idolatry of wood and stone, yet who do not scruple to bow down to paper and ink in book form, and to pay the dangerous homage of idolatry to their own conceptions.

To the Indian artist, from Ajanta of two thousand years ago to this Bengali painter of to-day, his religion is a part of himself even as he is inextricably a part of his religion. The idea of an inter-related totality of varied expressions of a central Life, he himself being one of those expressions, leaves no space for a separate perfect atom or a second of silence in the cosmic Dance of Shiva. His incompleteness is the token of his being an essential part of the whole. Were the artist complete, he might, forsooth, do without the universe, but at the hideous possible risk of the universe's doing also without him. The old Indian builders left an

unfinished item in their structures because nothing but God dare pretend to perfection. The Indian painters, consciously or unconsciously, in some touch of remissness in the midst of almost meticulous finish of detail, give indication of the imperfection through which blooms and exhales the exquisite lonely pathos of the beauty in great art, and at the same time disclose the impulse of the Celestial Artist in themselves in their effort to realise completely the incomplete moment.

In none of these subtle and not superficially to be apprehended processes is there the self-consciousness which analytical reference to them may suggest. The religiousness of the Indian painter is as purely integral a part of his make-up as his digestion. His response to the traditional symbols of his faith is spontaneous. His use of these symbols is equally spontaneous. They are to him signals of a reality that is at once in them and beyond them. They are at the same time sectarian and universal. Mr. Chatterjee's striking picture, "Pranava" (size 16″×10″), is something more than a subject taken at random from Hindu mythology. It is a majestic figure of the process in the cosmos and in the artist's own nature of the transmutation of gross substance

into spiritual essence through the fire of purification called *kundalini*. And because of his vision of the Life celestial and terrestrial, the Indian artist is saved from the alternative facing the Botticellis, of either giving perfect allegiance to the "ostensible subject" of his religious pictures or following his "original sentiment" and continuing the tradition of hypocrisy in art. To the Indian artist his sectarian symbolism is justified by its universal significance. The thrill of reality is in it. Image, meaning and feeling are instantaneous and sincere. So intimately, indeed, has this gift of his race entered into his imagination and been absorbed as a faculty, rather than preserved as a memento, that he can, with equal instantaneousness and sincerity, speak his vision of reality through the embodiments of a faith other than his own. This is exemplified in a picture by Babu Promode Chatterjee entitled "The Call of Light" (16″×10″). Prince Siddharta and his wife are in a beautiful garden. A moment before the incident of the picture (as we surmise) they have been enjoying the ecstasy of affection and nature. But a Call has sounded. We know its origin from our glimpse of two celestial beings seen through a break in the foliage above them, but unseen by them.

The prince, his wife still clasped in his arms, has thrown back his head and closed his eyes. The moment of the cutting of the Call of Celestial Light across the body of terrestrial fire is movingly realised in the posture of the Buddha-to-be, and is deeply emphasised in the gesture of the wife, who clings to him, and yet, in the very clinging, seems to push him from her towards his dimly felt destiny as Lord, not of earthly flame, but of Divine Illumination. Here again we touch this artist's sensitiveness to the double voice of life; and the picture takes on, through contemplation of it, a significance which belongs not only to Buddhist tradition but to the spiritual history of every awakened human being to whom has come the choice between the things of the lower degrees of life and "the things that are more excellent". Its sectarianism has been universalised, not as regards its externals as the manner of zealotry is, but as regards its essence as the manner of seership is. It is therefore saturated with conviction. There is no "pretext" in it such as Pater charges Leonardo da Vinci with, through which "it comes to pass that though he handles sacred subjects continually, he is the most profane of painters". The statement may be reversed not only with regard to this

particular Indian painter, but with regard to Indian painters in general: Let them handle what profane subjects they may, they are the most religious of painters, but without the suggestion of pretext, for pretext only arises from conspiracy to place the half-gods on the thrones of the Gods.

But indeed the word profane is not in the Indian artist's vocabulary. With the eye of *samadarsana* he sees, as says an *Upanishad*, "the One in the many" and therefore "the many in the One;" for where there is true vision there is the attitude and act of unity, and where there is no vision there is division. To the Indian painter the "ostensible subject" and the "real matter" are identical in essence though diverse in expression; and it is because of the reinforcement of significance and sincerity in the best works of modern Indian artists such as Babu Promode Kumar Chatterjee and his peers, that they acquire a power and value apparently disproportionate to their size and simplicity. By the side of the masterpieces of Europe they may be as grains of sand, but in them he who has eyes to see may see a world, and, so seeing, may, on the authority of a western visionary who was both painter and poet, William Blake, take his place with the true Innocents who,

while they rejoice no less than others in the scintillant glories of the craft of man, rejoice also and more in the radiant hieroglyphs of his immortal spirit.

V

In his book of essays entitled *Creative Unity* (Macmillan, New York), Dr. Rabindranath Tagore throws a bridge across the gulf that western criticism has set between the function of thought and the function of expression, between philosophy and literature. He has given to the world a volume which, by virtue of its transcendent qualities of utterance, takes rank among the masterpieces of world-literature; a volume which, at the same time, sets the profoundest synthetic thought close to the world's vast problem of disease and agony to-day, and out of an unflinching but compassionate diagnosis, prescribes for temporal ills the heroic but only availing remedies of the pharmacopeia of eternal Truth. He has thus rendered a signal and far-reaching service to both literature and philosophy by giving his unique gifts of brilliance and astonishment of idea, of splendour and vividness of figure and phraseology, to the expression of an urgent,

moving and world-embracing purpose, and by releasing philosophy from the bare prison of textualism and scholastic history, and setting it to the testing of the activities of life with the warning, pleading, counselling trumpet of high literature at its lips. He has made it impossible for any who have ears to hear the resonant and shining message of this book to acquiesce any longer in the indolent and uncritical acceptance of literature as the polite mental libertinism of humanity, and philosophy as its medicine and penance.

Before a book such as this, criticism of the negative order lays aside its microscope and scalpel—or expends itself in a feeble reference to the merely external fact that the essays included in *Creative Unity* were written under a variety of circumstances and without immediate organic relationship to a single central theme. What is vital to the world is not the question of the mechanism of these essays or their connection with former presentations of their substance in their author's books on Personality and Nationalism, but the fact that they present adequately and maturely their writer's plea for the establishment in human relationships of a unity which, by participating in the divine function of creation,

attains peace and joy; a 'creative unity' in contradistinction to the present world-wide religious, racial, and social disunity which, because it is essentially uncreative, and merely productive and destructive, is vowed to spiritual abasement, intellectual poverty, and physical misery.

Such is, in brief, the message of *Creative Unity* and of Tagore to the world. It is the poet's clear call to *samadarsana*. To realise its full significance, it is necessary to understand the implications which the author puts on the words "creative" and "unity", and on the words "nationalism" and "internationalism" which, to Tagore, stand for the organised expression in human society of the opposed forces of destruction and creation.

There is a rough and ready idea in the popular mind of the West that "creation" means the making of something out of nothing. The subtler mind of the East postulates a creative Power, and a Substance which, in being capable of response to the creative Power, has within itself the principle of creation. All activity of a creative kind is seen as the making (Sanskrit, *kri*, to make) of new combinations within limited areas of the (to us) unlimited sphere of possible variation in life, substance, and form.

Creation, therefore, in this sense, is not simple reproduction or multiplicity, but the setting up of a process which draws around a special centre of energy certain related expressions in substance and quality, and the "making" of some new object of art that thrills both maker and beholder with joy in the disclosure through the finite of the wonder and beauty of the Infinite. Artistic creation is possible only through acts of unification in materials and qualities; social creation (instead of the vast antagonistic proliferations of to-day) is possible only through acts of unification in the thoughts and feelings, the aims and movements, of human beings. Says Rabindranath:

> We feel that this world is a creation (in the sense that has just been set forth); that in its centre there is a living idea which reveals itself in an eternal symphony played on innumerable instruments all keeping perfect time. We know that this great world-verse, that runs from sky to sky, is not made for the mere enumeration of facts; it has its direct revelation in our delight. That delight gives us the key to the truth of existence; it is personality acting upon personalities through incessant manifestations.

When a great seer and sayer points his finger towards "the truth of existence," it behoves those who have set out with open eyes on the Great Exploration for that very Truth, to pay close heed to all that is involved in the crucial

statement that "the truth of existence" is "personality acting on personalities . . ." This full-minded attention is all the more necessary here because it happens that, through the exigencies of a language in which the mental and material solidity of the Greek genius is predominant, the only word (personality) that Tagore could find for the full expression of that ultimate Being, or Life, or Consciousness, within which "our little systems" and the incalculable universes revolve, is commonly regarded as meaning just the reverse. And this work-a-day reading of the term has come down through two thousand years of verbal custom from the days of the theatre of Greece and Rome, when (as in Japan to-day) the actor hid himself behind a *persona*, or mask, the thing through which he spoke (Latin *per* through, *sono* to speak). In the vocabulary of *Creative Unity* the derivation of "personality" is taken further back, from the thing spoken through, to the living speaker; and this deepening of meaning refers not only to the personalities that are as cells in the body of the Great Personality, but also to the Great Personality Itself. The eye gifted with *samadarsana* sees that within the totality of existence, and within its details, there is

consciousness, feeling, activity. No one of these terms gives full expression to the entity in whom these functions are co-ordinated and given unity of life. The word "personality" is taken as coming (despite its limitations) nearest to adequacy of meaning.

In the exercise of consciousness, feeling and activity, there arises a sense of satisfaction beyond the immediate pleasure of thought, of sensation, or of movement. This deeper pleasure is the *ananda* (bliss) of Eastern thought that is the response between one person and another and between the nominally separated personalities and the Personality of the whole; "and that immediacy of intercommunication arises out of the simple unavoidable fact that there is no getting beyond that Totality; that there is nothing but that Being, that Life, that Divine Personality." This, according to Tagore, is "the truth of existence". It is also the justification of all those efforts to express in terms of race and place some apprehension of the Divine Personality, which have been called anthropomorphism as applied to the monotheistic religions, and idolatry as applied to the polytheistic.

It is obvious that a mind to which this "truth of existence" (the Divine Personality acting on

human personalities) is not merely a literary idea but the very breath of its nostrils, cannot but look with disapproval on any human activity whose tendency is towards exclusiveness or the building of barriers against the flow of the Universal Life. There is within each human being the impulse to creative unity. Says Rabindranath:

> It is the object of this Oneness within us, to realise its infinity by perfect union of love with others. All obstacles to this union create misery, giving rise to the baser passions that are expressions of finitude, and of that separateness which is negative and therefore *maya*.

Now the word "love" used in the foregoing paragraph is not a mere evaporation from the surface of a fluid sentimentality. It is the poet's expression of the truth that in the Universal Life there is a principle of cohesion through which it maintains its identity and continues its activity. Separate any branch absolutely from the tree of life, and it will die—but the assumption of such separation is an impossibility; were it possible the universe would collapse. Take away the cohesive principle ("love") from the Universal Being, and it would disintegrate into nothingness—but the notion is absurd, for Life and Love are fundamental; you cannot get around them, or behind them, or through

them, or beyond them. For which reason Rabindranath says:

> In love we find a joy which is ultimate because it is the ultimate truth.

Love, too, was the ultimate truth to the great seer-poet, Shelley. It was love that released the chained Prometheus, and with him set free the suppressed powers of nature and humanity. It is characteristic of the different approach of West and East to "ultimate truth" that to Shelley love was the key of liberation, while to Tagore it is the cord of binding. Yet both are, in the end, the same. The freedom that Shelley dreamed of was freedom for love to find its full expression and voluntarily to seek its affinities; the binding that Tagore affirms is the voluntary merging of the self of illuminated human beings with others in love. The one dreamed of love attainable; the other affirms love present and invincible if put into action. The western poet, from the side of humanity capable of Divinity, says, "We must be free in order to love"; the eastern poet, from the side of the Divinity in humanity, says, "We must love, in order to be free." It is characteristic, also, of the contrasted but complementary points of view of West and East, that, while both poets regard human unity as the essential

condition of true creation in the arts and sciences (Shelley in the great chant of the Earth at the end of *Prometheus Unbound*, Tagore in *Creative Unity*), the western poet sees the attainment of world-comradeship as an event subsequent to the victory of the chained Titan over the tyrant Jove; and the eastern poet affirms the essential unity of humanity as existing here and now, and its recognition as the measure and test of all movements that take to themselves the sacred name of freedom.

We have said "the measure and test"—not the denial. It is just here that the contact of the message of Rabindranath Tagore with the national movements of the present day has been subject to misinterpretation. Years ago, when the writer of this article was doing his share of work on the literary side of the national revival in Ireland, the word "international" was as a red rag to a bull; it drew upon it a fierce opposition with lowered horns and dilated nostrils. There are those in India to-day who, in their zeal for their country's welfare, set themselves against the world-wide appeal of Tagore. To his "internationalism" they oppose their "nationalism," and do not realise that they are setting the part against the whole; asserting the fallacy that the interests of a constellation

are opposed to the interests of any of the stars which compose it; lifting a rebellious hand to do hurt to the body of which it is a member.

The real enemy of nationalism is itself, in its imposition of narrowness and exclusiveness on its own aims and methods; for these cut it off from the flux of the Divine Life, turn creative energy into destructive fever, and set up antagonisms which breed antagonisms. The enemy of Indian nationalism is not internationalism, but an alien nationalism. The "plantations" of English settlers in Ireland and the coming of the John Company to India were not international movements but predatory excursions from the lair of nationalism with intent to bring back to the lair as much and as good prey as might be snared or pounced upon. That such phenomena have their place in the scheme of the universe *samadarsana* cannot deny; but they are transitory phenomena of the process of evolution, not its achievement.

Against the whole spirit and operation of burglarious nationalism Rabindranath sets his condemnation and prophecy in speech that is kindred to the lightning which (as Paul Richard puts it in *The Scourge of Christ*), if it does not illuminate, slays. "The wriggling tentacles of

a cold-blooded utilitarianism," says Rabindranath, "with which the West has grasped all the easily yielding and succulent portions of the East, are causing pain and indignation throughout the eastern countries"—and causing it nowhere more strongly than in the heart of the great patriot who flung away title in rebuke of sin against the spirit of internationalism in the barbarities inflicted by the agents of one nation on another. One feels the flame of noble scorn in his condemnation of any system of foreign rule that holds itself aloof from the people it rules. He says:

> You must know that red tape can never be a common human bond; that official sealing-wax can never provide means of human attachment; that it is a painful ordeal for human beings to have to receive favours from animated pigeon-holes, and condescensions from printed circulars that give notice, but never speak.

But this condemnation strikes no more strongly at a foreign bureaucracy than at an indigenous bureaucracy if it assumes the method of the machine. Organisation, Tagore admits, is necessary. It is when the spirit of the machine assumes ascendancy that it becomes not only obnoxious to the elastic and expansive spirit of humanity, but dangerous to the machine itself; for "the repressed personality of man generates

an inflammable moral gas deadly in its explosive force ".

Here we are at the central point of Tagore's message to the world in its application to the world-struggle now going on, the point which, if deeply pondered, would banish from criticism of his utterances the false antithesis of nationalism and internationalism. The real struggle at every stage of human history, whether between or within nations, has been, he tells us, "between the living spirit of the people and the methods of nation-organising"; between the expanding soul of humanity (Indian or English) and mechanical limitations that refuse to adapt themselves to that expansion. We must take care, however, not to falsify *samadarsana* by looking upon the protagonists of this struggle as external enemies, one of whom must achieve victory by the annihilation of the other. The spirit of expansion and the spirit of organisation are not foes, but partners in one operation, and each achieves victory by making just sufficient concession to the other to permit the expression of the Divine Personality. There must be growth, says Rabindranath, but "growth is not that enlargement which is merely adding to the dimensions of incompleteness," it is "the movement of a whole to a yet fuller wholeness," which implies flexible

organisation at every stage of the process; and there must be the shaping service of a limitation that is yet free from rigidity, "some spiritual design of life" which curbs the activities of the peoples of the earth, and transforms the peoples into an "organic whole". The symbol for "nation-organising" should not be red-tape, which must be cut or loosed, but an elastic band capable of infinite expansion.

In this co-operative struggle the human spirit has the force of evolution with it, driving it forward by necessity, calling it onward by idealism, towards the freedom of voluntary association. When its demands and methods are in line with the spirit of harmony, it succeeds; but if its demands and methods are set towards power, it suffers frustration until it learns the better way. Harmony is the condition in which man's true nature, which is spiritual, finds adequate and appropriate expression, for harmony is the medium whereby personality communicates fully and joyfully with personality and finds the highway of communication with the Divine Personality—which is "the truth of existence". But power, personal or national, can only be generated through restriction and suppression which, carried beyond a certain point, brings about its own destruction. The

living air is universal, harmonious, beneficent; but capture a portion of it in a receptacle and subject it to pressure, and you produce an elastic, explosive force which will submit to the pressure just to a point of balance between its own resistance and the resisting-power of the agent of pressure. If and when explosion comes, it is not the air that is shattered, but the things that compress it. The yielding air, that the bird of gentle wing hardly ruffles in its passage through it, becomes the ruin of that which presses it beyond endurance.

There is safety only in harmony. The political leaders of the great nations see this truth, but only give it half allegiance. To-day they are seeking safety in a *harmony* artificially produced by a balance of *power*. They might as well try to simulate the harmony of the world-encircling ocean by making an alliance of icebergs. They will only collide with their own mass-attraction and sink with their own weight. If they want real harmony they must melt—melt out of "the exclusive advantages which they have unjustly acquired" through the exercise of frigid power. Instead of this, "they are concentrating their forces for mutual security"; and in this concentration Tagore sees trouble, for the strong think only of the strong, and

ignore the weak, wherein, he says, lies the peril of their losing the harmony at which they aim, and collapsing in a welter of still greater destruction than that from which they are blindly trying to extricate themselves. Tagore throws his conviction on this matter into a figure of speech which is supremely Indian, intensely vivid, and conclusive.

> The weak are as great a danger for the strong as quicksands for an elephant. They do not assist progress because they do not resist; they only drag down.

The League of European Elephants is on the edge of the Asian Quicksand—"yet in the psychology of the strong" no account is taken of "the terribleness of the weak". The "powers" on both sides of the Pacific have made a pact safeguarding them from one another; but Japan has under her feet the dangerous weakness of Korea.

This is the perilous position in which humanity stands to-day. It is summed up in a passage in *Creative Unity* which is not only literature at its highest, feeling and thinking with intensity, but is an admonition carried to the height of prophecy that cries, on behalf of the repressed of all lands and ages, the doom, sooner or later, of the enemy of the human

spirit, the spirit of greed which incarnates in the rapacious nations:

> Politicians calculate upon the number of mailed hands that are kept on the sword-hilts: they do not possess the third eye to see the great invisible hand that clasps in silence the hand of the helpless and waits its time. The strong form their league by a combination of powers, driving the weak to form their own league alone with their God. I know I am crying in the wilderness when I raise the voice of warning; and while the West is busy with its organisation of a machine-made peace, it will continue to nourish by its iniquities the underground forces of earthquake in the eastern continent. The West seems unconscious that science, by providing it with more and more power, is tempting it to suicide and encouraging it to accept the challenge of the disarmed; it does not know that the challenge comes from a higher source.

What is the way of escape from the universal catastrophe that is inherent in these circumstances? It has moved by implication parallel with the foregoing considerations. The solid clear-edged path of constructive idealism is under every step of the poet's criticism—though, with the sensitiveness of the artist, he refrains from didactic summarisation of the obvious. He says:

> I have often been blamed for merely giving warning, and offering no alternative. When we suffer as a result of a particular system, we believe that some other system would bring us better luck. We are apt to forget that all systems produce evil

> sooner or later, when the psychology which is at the root of them is wrong . . . And because we are trained to confound efficient system with moral goodness itself, every ruined system makes us more and more distrustful of moral law. Therefore I do not put my faith in any new institution, but in the individuals all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly and act rightly, thus becoming the channels of moral truth.

Tagore's message, therefore, as summed up in this book, is addressed neither to thought which stultifies itself in systems nor to feeling which circumscribes and artificially intensifies itself in exclusive movements, but to that share of the Divine Being which every man and woman possesses in his and her personality. But the ends of personality are not fulfilled in appropriation and accumulation: these frustrate the purpose of life, the interplay of Personality on personalities:

> For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realising our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union.

Two means at hand to this end are education and art; in the first, but in a different form and spirit from that obtainable in India to-day, can be found a meeting-ground between persons and groups of persons "where there can be no

question of conflicting interests," but only a common pursuit of truth and a common sharing of the world's heritage of culture ; in the second is the means of attainment of expression, which is fulfilment.

> In everyday life our personality moves in a narrow circle of immediate self-interest, and therefore our feelings and events, within that short range, become prominent subjects for ourselves. In their vehement self-assertion they ignore their unity with the All . . . But art gives our personality the disinterested freedom of the eternal, there to find it in its true perspective.

VI

The influence of *samadarsana* in the renaissance in India is not restricted to literature and the arts. It operates equally between the arts and philosophy. It infuses, as we have before remarked, philosophy through religion, and religion through philosophy. And in the revelations of Jagadish Chandra Bose, it has brought modern science back to the Vedantic unification of science with philosophy, religion and beauty as mutually dependent and mutually illuminating aspects, not of one system of thought, but of the operation of One Life and One Personality. We turn now to a brief consideration of the operation of same-sightedness

through a living Indian who, in direct perception of Truth is a mystic, in its intellectual elaboration is a philosopher, in its application to daily personal life is a religious, and in the unification of these with one another and with the beautiful in nature and life is a true exponent of *samadarsana*. But first a few observations to clarify understanding.

There is a tendency to place a special value on things that are out of reach. Age has, in truth, a value of its own, for that which remains through the passing of time must have in it something timeless; nevertheless the value of age should not monopolise our scales of judgment. The present has its value, though it is often obscured by minor considerations which appeal to special interests of the mind or emotions. This is especially true in the realm of mysticism and religion. The record of the purely mystical experience of individuals disengages itself from the general mass of life-experience in the lapse of time, and assumes a value in the mind of the future which is true as far as the experience is concerned, but gives it an exaggerated comparative value over similar experiences to-day, which are just as frequent and as authentic as those of a thousand years ago. Similarly, with regard to religion (which

is largely an effort to make mystical experience stable and regular), there is a tendency to make age the test of sanctity and authority, and to close the doors of the intuition against any new revelation from the inner worlds of truth. Such concession as is made to the demands of the spirit of evolution is yielded only in the matter of interpretation and understanding of a revelation assumed to have been complete when given to the world through some great Teacher.

But there are, in very truth, in the world to-day, men and women in whom the clear light of revelation is shining, whose thoughts and their expression are pulsating with the Divine Love and Wisdom. At all times there have been, and will be, individuals who possess the necessary qualifications of purity, selflessness, intelligence and intuition, for the reception of transcendental truth. In ancient times, in the midst of world-wide ignorance, they became prophets and leaders of humanity; to-day, in the midst of a spurious education, they are the forerunners of some fresh disclosure from the world of Reality, and in them can be detected in detail the tokens of that which will ultimately declare itself as the new Revelation.

Amongst such forerunners is T. L. Vaswani, an Indian born half a century ago of Hindu

parentage in Hyderabad, Sindh. A few years ago, he made a journey to the West, and (as Swami Vivekananda did before him at Chicago) set out at Berlin the fundamentals on which might be reared a universal faith. For seven or eight years his name has appeared on many leaflets which have gradually built up a realisation that in him India has a true mystic. During the last three years his addresses and writings have been gathered into a series of small books that have carried his name all over India and beyond it. Some of these deal with one phase of the struggle in India towards political freedom, and do not concern us here. Others indicate a wide knowledge and sympathy with religions other than that in which Vaswani was born. But it is his small but significant book, *Atmagnan—or Life in the Spirit* (Ganesh & Co., Madras), that sets the seal on its author as a thinker and a revealer of the deep truths of the Spirit. In the first dozen lines of his introduction he declares the knowledge of the Self (the reality behind phenomena either individual or cosmical—which is his full definition of *Atmagnan*) to be " not something merely conceptual or notional," but *Life*. Thus he takes his stand (with the true mystical poets, as distinct from the metaphysical poets) at the

very centre of things. His book is not a metaphysical discussion with a view to ratifying in reason his intuition of reality: it is, on the contrary, a true mystic's delaration of spiritual realisation handed over to an informed and cultivated mind to be worked out in its applications to daily life.

"The nineteenth century foundations of life have crumbled," says the author; "another basis is being eagerly sought for life-process and its purpose. A social idea is growing upon the age; exaggerated individualism is discredited; . . . the forces of negation are being exhausted . . . The social and political unrest of to-day is a painful confession concerning the inadequacy of modern life and the urgent need to secure a *spiritual centre* for civilisation. The passion for freedom, the craving for a soul-satisfying culture, the cry for a just democracy, the desire to secure a harmony of religion and science, the new interest in art, the new socio-economic forces asking for international intercourse, the new psychic investigations stirred by an impulse to rend the veil between this world and the unseen, the yearning for some sustaining system of life—are a witness, I believe, to the necessity of a Spiritual Synthesis of the meaning and values of experience."

I have transcribed this passage because of its fine summarisation of the forces operating in the complicated psychosis of the world to-day. On one side he sets the negative elements that cry out against the futility and disintegration of an unspiritual view of life; on the other the positive elements that demand some true basis of co-ordination, some illuminating and satisfying synthesis. That synthesis must, he declares, rest on the realisation of the one *Atman* (Self or Spirit) behind all externalisation in form and limitation. He sees the search for this realisation most plainly in the experiences and teachings of the philosopher-saints of India. "The Hindu craved for the *Atman*; so he developed a system of *yoga,* a social polity of *dharma,* a religion of *communion.* Inwardness was a characteristic of the *Rishi's* life; he did not entangle himself in externalism; he saw the world-secret from within; therefore was he called the *Rishi*—the seer . . . he sang of the One *Atman* immanent in all . . . God is represented as being not alien to the universe . . . but in intimate and abiding relations with nature and man . . . *The Bhagavad-Gita* sings in rapturous strains of the One in Whose presence all things become bright . . . The same world-idea is eloquent in the songs and sayings of the

teachers of mediæval India . . ." of whom he gives a list. These indicate India's search for the Universal Self.

Of the nature of the Self, and of man's approach to that Self through religion, Vaswani says: "The *Atman* is not the cold barren Being of abstract ontology (the science of being), nor the static 'substance' of mediæval Theology. The Absolute that is incapable of establishing relations with the finite is a poor wooden being. God is the *Atman* . . . the timeless Self in contact with the soul . . . Religion, thus, is not a dogma, but consciousness—not a creed imposed *ab extra*, but a personal, vital realisation of the Self. Mere concepts of God are unavailing. Religion without an *Atman*-consciousness becomes either legalism or rationalism."

Of this God-awareness or *Atman*-consciousness he speaks thus: "This God-experience is, to my mind, the supreme fact in the religious history of the race. It becomes a perception of the Infinite in the world's thinkers; it grows into the glory of God-vision in a Christ, a Krishna, a Chaitanya. It is not merely emotional; it is not void of cognitive consciousness. Neither is it merely intellectual . . . God has been pictured often in human (and animal) forms; the low anthropomorphic conception of God must give way to

one based on a theomorphic view of human nature. Man is a symbol of God." This God-consciousness in all things alters our attitude to nature. "The more one grows in God, the more one feels that nature is not alien. There is the law of correspondence; and the greater our progress in the Life of the Spirit, the richer the response we receive from the Universe."

The emotional effect of this experience is naturally joyful; it brings the joy of assurance. As a Upanishad says: "The Infinite is joy: there is no joy in anything finite divorced from the Infinite." . . . "Even as a grain of rice, is the golden Purusha (Person) in my heart; even as a smokeless light, the Purusha is greater than the sky, greater than ether, greater than the earth, greater than all existing things; that Self is my self; and verily whosoever has this trust, for him there is no uncertainty."

The attainment of this realisation, or God-consciousness, is the culminating point of Hindu spiritual culture, by whatever special path (*yoga*) that culminating point is approached. The acceptance of this ideal leads to *samadarsana* or same-sightedness; that is, to the seeing of the One Divine Power at work in all phases of existence, not as objective and separated externalisations of that Power, but as part and

parcel of the total process of the Divine Life. Hence (following the teaching of *The Bhagavad-Gita*), all paths lead to the peak, and Hindu spiritual culture knows nothing of intolerance or limitation. Hindu social organisation may have its grades and compartments, and (for the present) open only to its amenities the gate of birth; but the great fundamentals of principle and practice out of which that particular social entity has sprung are for all peoples and ages. Otherwise there would be no point in Mr. Vaswani's plea in *Atmagnan* for a spiritual world-synthesis based on the Hindu teaching of the One *Atman*, and working out in the attainment of God-consciousness. The expression of the idea, however, is Indian; the method of attainment is Indian—*Viveka* or Discrimination, *Sadhan* or Discipline, *Sradda* or pure Faith, *Vastra-haran* or the transcendence of the instruments of the *Atman*—sense, thought and personal will. This is no matter of reading of scriptures, or the going through a set of commercialised lessons in *Yoga*. It is a matter of long, strenuous, unwavering devotion; and the reward of renunciation (*Vastra-haran*) is the reattainment of all that was renounced, but at a higher level and for the service of humanity.

Mr. Vaswani is not content to let the matter rest in his declaration of the ideal, and the method of attaining it. He endeavours to add conviction to his great message by indicating in what manner its practical acceptance would affect certain of the activities of humanity, both within and without India. He is keenly alive to the deprivation under which humanity labours at present through the false barriers which a material and local interpretation of the world's scriptures has placed between sincere searchers after spiritual truth and God-consciousness. While these barriers remain, the spirit of renaissance cannot adequately function in humanity. He therefore sees in the doctrine of the One *Atman* a means by which to reinterpret Christian thought and practice, and to bring it into vital association with other systems of eastern thought and practice. This helpfulness of the Hindu point of view he bases on certain qualities possessed by the Hindu genius—the power of contemplation which easily realises the Eternal; the sacramental value of life held by Hinduism; the Hindu appreciation of symbolism which enables a Hindu to enter fully into the spirit of the Parables of Christ.

These characteristics of Hindu genius result, Mr. Vaswani considers, in a difference of attitude

which is needed for the world's renaissance. "While the dominant note of the Jewish Scriptures is 'faith,' the Hindu Scriptures ring with the cry of 'vision'; the Jewish word is *Covenant*; the vital word with the Hindu is *Communion*." From this point of view Mr. Vaswani believes that Jesus needs to be reinterpreted in the light of the Hindu idea of *Avataras*, rather than full and complete single incarnations of Deity. "India," he says, "calls upon Europe to universalise the Christ. The West has long limited the operations of the Spirit to one Individual. In Jesus was the Logos, but not in Him alone."

Inevitably Mr. Vaswani "believes in the unity of the world's great religions". "If you identify a religion with its dogmas," he says, "it is true it will be in conflict with other religions. But if you determine the *interior principle* of a religion, you will discern its harmony with other faiths." This is the true *samadarsana* which sees similarities not as accidental but essential; and Mr. Vaswani, in his great little book, groups certain similarities of religious teaching in a paragraph so scholarly and illuminating that I quote it in full.

All the world-religions teach belief in prayer, immortality, and the moral law. The idea of the

"Word" (the Logos) is found in Philo, in Clement of Alexandria, in the *Vedas* and the *Gita*. The doctrine of conscience, again, is beautifully expressed in the *Mahabharata*:

> Thou thinkest, I am single and alone:
> Perceiving not the great Eternal Sage
> Who dwells within thy breast: whatever wrong
> Is done by thee, He sees and notes it all.

The Buddha preaches over and over again the Dharma, the Law of Righteousness and loving Service. "Know ye, O people! that we are all brethren," says Muhammad. The Chinese Sage gives the Law, "Recompense injury with kindness," and Manu's words breathe the very spirit of the Sermon on the Mount: "Against an angry man let him not in return show anger: let him bless when he is cursed." So in the Buddhist *Dhammapada* we read: "Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love." *The Quran* has the words: "Seek again him who drags you away; give to him who takes away from you; pardon him who injures you." And is not the following prayer of the ancient Persians an outpouring of the truly devout soul?—"Thou pure and all-pervading Spirit, manifest Thyself in me as Light when I think, as Mercy when I act, and, when I speak, as Truth, always Truth."

Mr. Vaswani does not, of course, overlook the dissimilarities of consciousness and their expression that exist among human kind. He regards the similarities as coming from the operation of the One *Atman* and the dissimilarities as arising from the gradual "accommodation of

truth" to man's capacity to receive it in various ages and places. This is a point of special value to all who would seek a reasonable *modus operandi* among the followers of the different faiths. It provides an intelligible nexus between the Absolute and the relative, that difficult position which humanity occupies in the cyclic course of its wanderings "from the great deep to the great deep".

Here we pause to make a definition as the connecting link between the foregoing exposition of Mr. Vaswani's teaching of the One *Atman* and its practical application in the inter-relationships of humanity. *Samadarsana* is that particular outlook which has withdrawn itself beyond immersion in details, and focussed itself at an elevation from which it beholds life's movements not as isolated actions but as interactions under the compulsion of one Power. This elevation does not mean the ignoring of details, but the seeing of them in true perspective, an attainment impossible while one is intent on a particular phase of action and ignores others. As is the proportion of attachment to a particular action, so is the proportion of untruth in one's action. Truth is only attainable through detachment. The true mystic is the truly detached man or woman whose vision,

by virtue of its detachment, is direct and unsullied. It is from this elevation that Mr. Vaswani, viewing the two great paths along which the human spirit has sought peace and enlightenment (withdrawal from activity and immersion in activity), declares: "What the world needs is neither Quietism nor extreme Pragmatism which is Utilitarianism; the world needs *Social Mysticism* which is a harmony of communion and service, of *yoga* and *karma*." This is the theme of a short but packed chapter in *Atmagnan* which one would like to quote in full. Its essence, however, is conveyed in the following sentences:

> View the human race simply as a biological organism, as an assemblage of individuals born in time and perishing with the process of the suns, and it will at best have claims on your social duty; it cannot inspire you with supreme devotion. On the other hand, view the human race as a *spiritual organism* whereof every member is immortal, and you feel Humanity is worth working for, suffering for, dying for. Social service must have its inspiration in the love of God.

This attitude means, therefore, the postulating of an *Atman*, a Self deeper than that of the transitory moment, and to come in touch with it, some method of withdrawal from details is necessary. Mr. Vasvani therefore emphasises in modern life the ancient Indian practice of

meditation as a collateral to action, meditation guiding action, action testing the guidance. This is the mystic-philosopher's apprehension in thought of the double sword of Kalki referred to above as expressed visually by the Bengali painter. This double process is, of course, the method of all action however trivial; there is a perpetual interplay between outer and inner. But in ordinary life it does not go deep enough. It oscillates too near the so-called *real* or practical aspect of life, and misses the full force of the inner power which is, in the last analysis, the source of action. "The Ideal is the Real," says Mr. Vaswani, "and therefore is the groundwork of all that is practical in the best sense of that word. A servant of humanity must also be a worshipper of the '*Atman* in the heart'" —that is to say, true service can only be rendered by constant reference to the central principle of the Oneness of all Life.

How does this apply to the relationships between the nations to-day? Mr. Vaswani summarises the history of Europe from 1815 to 1915 in a paragraph which discloses the fundamental restlessness that is the natural expression of an expansive impulse which, being mainly on the physical plane, results in domination of the weak by the strong, and, when all the weak are

dominated, brings collision between the strong themselves. Hence the Great War. With clear vision Mr. Vaswani sees that even the redemptive movements in Europe which followed the French Revolution and have been infinitely expanded by the War, are but class modifications of the same spirit "The Socialism of England is hunger-born and has yet to rise to a conception of Humanity as the indwelling spirit of all Nations." Socialism, Nationalism, Imperialism—all fail of their greatest achievement for want of a spiritual ideal.

The moral of this indictment is not for Europe alone. India, in the hour of her re-awakening to her immemorial mission as the Mother of Cultures, has need to listen too:

> When love of one's country becomes hate of others, it is a disease . . . Nationalism must be related to a Spiritual Synthesis of life . . . That Synthesis India's great Teachers taught in the *ashramas* and during their wanderings abroad. That Synthesis has a value for modern life. For there is the Old which, like the sunrise, does not decay, but returns, age after age, bathed in fresh glory. There is the Ancient which is not the sport of time but belongs to all time. This *Atma-vidya* India offers to the West . . . The Nations need world-patriots, thinkers and artists, poets and preachers and statesmen, who would lift individuals and States beyond the exclusively National to the Universal, beyond Race-pride to a World-vision—the vision of Divine Humanity.

The curtain against this Vision is, according to Mr. Vaswani, *pride.* There is pride, he says, in the dominating civilisations, and, he adds, there is pride in India's patriotism and philanthropy. Take away that pride, personal, communal or national, and the Vision of the One Life will come to India and the world with a great after-wave of regeneration.

Such is the message which Mr. Vaswani has given to India to-day as a renascent inspiration in his book *Atmagnan*, from which " thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more ".

VII

Progress along any line of human activity comes mainly from some new impulsion of necessity. This is true also of those inventions and discoveries which have been regarded as sporadic and unregulated outbursts of detached genius, but which, on closer scrutiny, show themselves to be orderly recognitions and applications of forces and laws that existed from the foundation of the world. The genius lay in the recognition and application ; but the evolution of the human consciousness, through the necessities of its being, brought the details

of life to the particular juxtaposition that enabled genius to get a glimpse beyond. The telegraph did not produce, as out of nothing, the haste of modern business life; it came out of the necessity for greater expedition in affairs; and in the interplay of necessity and its instruments, the moment came when the so-called inventor saw from wire to wireless.

But whether a new step in human development comes through genius, or through mass necessity (as is happening on a large scale all over the world to-day), it has three forces playing upon it, the proper understanding of which will help the step sanely and steadily towards fulfilment. The three forces are the past, the present and the future. The needs of the present give the spur to activity. Wise statesmanship will not stand by and lament the activity while it gathers momentum and the destructive force of unbridled emotion; it will rather seek to understand the circumstances in the past that have led up to present circumstances; and will seek "to take occasion by the hand," and by wise provision based on the fullest possible knowledge of the past to realise Tennyson's paradox of making wider "the *bound*s of *freedom*" in an expeditious, orderly and stable manner.

But a still wiser statesmanship will not wait for some new threat of rupture somewhere on the periphery of the ever internally expanding sphere of human consciousness. It will recognise the inevitability of such strain against boundaries, and will seek to ease the perpetual process of readjustment that is the sign, the condition, the botheration, and the glory of human evolution. The means to such easement is education.

Here we collide unceremoniously with the vast contradiction of present conditions in Europe. The most highly educated peoples of the world are prostrate in exhaustion or writhing from the wounds and devastation of the greatest orgy of mutual murder that the mad record of human history has on its blood-stained pages. On the other hand, the most illiterate country of the world (India) has been left comparatively unaffected by the Kurukshetra of Europe. Her present-day agitations are, admittedly, indirect sequelæ of the Great War, echoes and perturbations translated into the subtle speech of religious and national enthusiasms; but they are trifling (even in their most extreme expressions) when placed by the side of the colossal humiliation and misery of the once arrogant and prosperous Europe.

We cannot accept the syllogism that this contradiction to our offer of education for the easement of human readjustment presents. In a sense it is true that Europe educated herself into the War—but the deeper truth is that her education was not education applied to herself, but a system of training applied to the inferior faculties of human nature and directed to purposes more worthy of the predatory carnivora of the subhuman kingdoms than of beings made in the image and likeness of God, as they claimed themselves to be. In the intense focussing of the eyes on the present, the lessons of the past were unconned or unheeded, and such vision as there was of the future was not the vision of *samadarsana* raised towards the summits of spiritual attainment, but was shot across the low levels of personal advancement and class or national aggrandisement. Education was for "fitness"—fitness for self-service, not for self-sacrifice. Education was for "keenness"—the keenness of a sundering edge, not of the unifying light. Nemesis came, sure and thorough—for they who only sharpen their wits sharpen also the sword.

There have been, of course, many attempts to bring sanity into educational life during the last quarter of a century. Fundamentals have been

uncovered and experiments carried out in the application of principles. But these new elements were small in bulk, and incapable of catching up on the organised mental gormandising and pugilism that are the main characteristics of school life. But the new ideas are spreading. In some parts of the world the old false training in rapacity, that made the War only a more efficient and articulate devildom than the wars of kings who could not sign their names, has been intensified through the carrying over of hatred into the time of theoretical peace.

On the other hand, there are signs which give hope that the next generation to enter the schools of the world will find larger possibilities for the expression of the best that is in them. To this coming improvement India (though through recent historical causes she is among the least educated of nations) has contributed her share of wisdom. European thinkers have gone to her ancient intellectual gardens for root ideas from which have blossomed many of the fairest flowers of modern thought.

We believe that educational thought and practice will remain incomplete until it has fully absorbed and acted upon India's synthetic revelation of the nature of the human unit; its

relationship to the other units, to nature, and to the universe; and the tested means for the work of true education. Her ancient literatures are studded with radio-active gems of wisdom. But there are difficulties of scholarship and interpretation. To-day, however, Indians of world rank, who speak from the point of view of the soul of India, but who can command the manner and accent of Europe, have set themselves the task of making exposition of India's educational ideas. Tagore's writings on education are widely known. His *Centre of Asian Culture*[1] is a document of great power, backed up as it is by the poet's twenty years' experience as the head of a school run more or less on the traditional Indian lines. Mr. Aurobindo Ghose, who is both a graduate of Oxford and a master of Indian philosophy and discipline, took the matter of Indian education in hand during the political agitation in Bengal fifteen years ago. Some of his writings have recently been gathered into a small but very significant book entitled *A Scheme of National Education.*[2] He emphasises as the first principles of education the recognition of the infinite subtlety and sensitiveness of the human mind, which he regards

[1] Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras.

[2] Tagore & Co., Madras.

(in line with Hindu psychology) as the sixth and master sense, the co-ordinating or synthesising power behind the physical senses. He lays it down that students must be regarded as "children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future". Here Mr. Ghose is giving expression to the best modern generalisations on education; but his trinity of past, present and future has a more profound significance than pride in history, greedy accumulation, or selfish ambition. There is a distinctive Indian connotation to speech, and in this book we have a distinctive Indian contribution to educational wisdom.

We find this distinctive contribution indicated in Mr. Ghose's declaration of "the chief aim in education," which should be, he says, "to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best, and make it perfect for a noble use." On the surface these words may appear to differ very little from the best thought of non-Indian educationists who are lifting their eyes above the level of the purely vocational and ulterior in education. To get at their distinctive import we have to realise clearly what is meant by the words "the growing soul". They do not mean merely that bundle of desires and notions labelled by a

personal name, and developing through the ignorances of innocent childhood to the more loquacious ignorances, the more elaborate desires, the more tyrannical notions of age. What is meant (in the unspoken terminology of the Indian educationist) is the deepest synthetic principle of the individual life, the inner "divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will"—"we," at the circumference of life, "Chained to the wheel of the world, Blind with the dust of its speed."

We have a clue to the deeper significance of the word "soul" than non-Indian peoples attach to it in a sentence bearing on the educational principle of working "from the near to the far, from that which is, to that which shall be": "The basis of a man's nature is, almost always (in addition to his soul's past), his heredity, his surroundings, his nationality, his country . . ." The phrase "his soul's past," which is taken as part of the basis of a man's nature, indicates that its present physical embodiment is but a fraction of its life, and contributes only fractionally to its growth. "The growing soul" is not, therefore, a secondary derivative product of the cultural activities of life. Life reacts upon it—but only infinitesimally in comparison with its action on life. The

soul is not grown like flowers or vegetables: it is itself the directive agent of growth. It is all that which is summed up in the fundamental temperament of the student; the tone, the colour, the distinctively characteristic response to the impacts of the external universe; it is the inevitable thing that maintains continuity and identity through all the fluctuations of thought and feeling. Whether we regard the "soul's past" as a series of re-embodiments, as Hindu philosophy teaches, or hold, in a less precise manner, with Wordsworth that—

> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar . . .

we can no longer ignore it in our thinkings around matters educational. Education in the highest means the leading forth of the soul, and that leading forth necessitates the training of the instruments of the soul. The instruments consist, according to our Hindu psychologist, of the six senses—the five physical senses, and the mental sense.

This sixth sense is called by Mr. Aurobindo Ghose the mind, the *antahkarana*, or coherer of the operations of the outer senses. Its process is fourfold. There is its own special function

of reception and transmission. But this function has on either side of it two others without which it would remain inoperative. Thought (the function of *manas*) would be impossible without a store of facts in detail; it would be equally impossible without the means of selecting, sifting, grouping and presenting generalisations in new external situations. The storage process is that called memory, which is the function of the *chitta* or stuff of the mind. The classifying process belongs to the *buddhi*, or intellect, the central flame, of which the facts held by the *chitta* are the embers, and the *manas* the brazier. The fourth aspect of this mental process is not given a name by Mr. Ghose. Its powers, he says, "are chiefly known to us from the phenomena of genius—sovereign discernment, intuitive perception of truth, plenary inspiration of speech, direct vision of knowledge to an extent often amounting to revelation, making a man a prophet of truth,"—in short an exponent of *samadarsana*.

These are the true peaks of educational endeavour. Whatever value we may set on "training for life" in the present in a vocational sense (and the higher the value the better), we cannot get the true perspective in our educational vision if we do not realise that the foregoing

"phenomena of genius" (which cause bewilderment and disorganisation in an inadequate and inflexible "system of schooling") are just the very things through which, in the past, humanity has developed thus far and will develop still further in the future. In a moment of discernment beyond the common view, a decision has been taken which has altered the current of evolution. Millions of men saw steam for thousands of years—but one man realised its power, and the wheels of the world went faster.

The outer things of life are but material expressions of immaterial processes. The lower must give place to the higher in educational aims. The true aim of education is to give the world not profits, but prophets. The inheritance of the past is, therefore, interior as well as exterior, spiritual as well as intellectual, emotional and material. The possession of the present is possession *by* the individual, not the possession *of* the individual by his possessions—to the obscuration of the soul. The creation of the future is of a future expanded to the dimensions of the growing soul, and expressing in its organisation and processes the synthetic quality first seen in the vision of *samadarsana*.

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